

Random Encounters

Spider, Spider, Burning Bright ...

By Ramon Arjona



Naradna, Drider

The Spider Goddess is cruelest to her own children. From them she demands unquestioning sacrifice and endless bloodshed. The drow priestesses enforce the core tenet of their faith, "We are all Lolth's food," with the steady stream of sacrifices meant to appease their goddess. The harsh Queen of the Demonweb likewise enforces this maxim, by confronting her children with evidence of her malice and caprice at every opportunity, punishing the most insignificant failure with the most unspeakable suffering.



Throughout their lives, the drow are faced with an unending battery of challenges designed to test their self-confidence, their cruelty, and their strength. The more powerful drow are faced with more strenuous testing, perhaps because Lolth realizes that their greater abilities must be honed by overcoming still greater obstacles, or perhaps because the Spider Goddess grows jealous of the greatest among her followers. Should a drow fail a test, one of the punishments the Spider Goddess sometimes gives is a transformation into a drider, which is a hideous blending of drow and spider. Doomed to exile from their home and fated to be forever hunted by their former brethren, the driders dwell alone in the Underdark and are sustained only by their undying hatred of the drow who shun them.

The cleric Naradna was once such drow: beautiful, strong, ruthless and talented in the art of magic. What she lacked, however, was the favor of the Spider Goddess. Lolth made the young woman's test especially difficult, so she was all but doomed to failure from the outset. It is a testament to the young drow's tenacity that she nearly succeeded in her test, despite the difficult circumstances, forcing Lolth to intervene with a well-timed *curse*.

Thus deprived of victory by the Queen of the Demonweb herself, Naradna was subjected to the painful and humiliating punishment. Transformed into a drider, she fled into the deepest recesses of the Underdark to plot her vengeance.

Naradna lurks, waiting for the appropriate moment to strike. Perhaps, she reasons, if she can appease the Spider Goddess properly, Lolth will restore her to her previous form. Lolth, she knows, can be placated with sacrifices. She also knows Lolth prefers drow over any other kind of sacrifice. Therefore, to regain the Spider Queen's favor, she intends to sacrifice the entire drow race. This genocidal plan is ambitious, but Naradna is the being who can do it, if any can. She has already laid in a stockpile of magic items and formed key partnerships with other powerful denizens of the Underdark, waiting patiently for the right moment to begin her holy war against her former kin.

Naradna: Female drider Clr 13 (6 as drider plus 7 additional cleric levels); CR 14; Large aberration; HD 6d8+6 plus 7d8+7; hp 113; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Atk +9 melee (1d4+1, bite), or +9/+4 melee (1d6+1/19-20, short sword) and +4 melee (1d4, bite), or +8/+3 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); Face/Reach 10 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.; SA poison, rebuke undead 2/day, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +13; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Climb +13, Concentration +17, Hide +6, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Spellcraft +17, Spot +5; Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell.

Poison (Ex): Naradna delivers her poison (Fortitude save DC 14) with each successful bite attack. The initial and secondary damage are the same (1d6 Strength damage).

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day -- *clairaudience/clairvoyance, dancing lights, darkness, detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law, detect magic, discern lies, dispel magic, faerie fire, levitate, suggestion*. Caster level 6th; save DC 9 + spell level.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/6+1/6+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1/1+1; save DC 13 + spell level): 0 -- *detect magic* (2), *guidance* (2), *resistance* (2); 1st -- *cause fear* (3), *detect undead*, *doom*, *protection from good**, *summon monster I*; 2nd -- *aid* (2), *desecrate**, *enthrall* (2), *lesser restoration*, *silence*; 3rd -- *animate dead* (3), *magic circle against good**, *prayer* (2); 4th -- *giant vermin*, *restoration* (2), *summon monster IV*, *unholy blight**; 5th -- *circle of doom**, *healing circle*, *slay living* (2); 6th -- *greater dispelling*, *harm**, *summon monster VI*; 7th -- *blasphemy**, *word of chaos*.

*Domain spell. Deity: Lolth. Domains: Destruction (smite 1/day), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: Spider rod**, unholy symbol.

**From [Magic of Faerûn](#).

Notes on Using the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*: Substitute the Drow and Spider domains for the Destruction and Evil domains, and add the Lightning Reflexes

feat. You can also swap out the spells *detect undead*, *slay living*, and *harm* for *cloak of dark power*, *spiderform*, and *spider curse* respectively.

Introducing Naradna to Your Campaign

- Naradna has successfully gathered an army of driders, mind flayers, derro, and other Underdark races, and she has begun to move against the drow. She is remarkably successful, perhaps indicating that the Spider Queen is, for once, on Naradna's side. The few survivors of a drow city contact the PCs and regale them with tales of Naradna's cruelty -- which surpasses that imaginable even by the drow. The drow are willing to give the PCs anything they want and are not above making promises they can't fulfill if only the PCs will help them repel Naradna's advancing forces before she succeeds in annihilating all dark elves.
- Shadowy beings approach the PCs, promising them an opportunity to reap great rewards while ridding the world of a tremendous evil. These people -- rogues, thieves, bards, and assassins for the most part - - are part of Naradna's network. She is attempting to draw them into her plot to destroy the drow. Naradna gives the PCs progressively more important and more difficult tasks, until she is finally assured of their capability and their loyalty. Only when she is certain that the PCs will be useful to her plan does she finally reveal her true intention.
- The PCs are searching for a dark elven artifact -- the *Sword of Selvetarm* -- that they intend to destroy, rather than allow it to fall into the wrong hands. Unfortunately, their goals directly conflict with Naradna's, who wants the artifact in question for herself. The drider hopes to turn the artifact against the dark elves and hopes to thwart the PCs' plan to destroy it. She attempts to rally the PCs to her cause before entering into conflict with them, and it is up to the PCs to determine whether the destruction of one evil justifies the existence of another.

Bringing the Parts Together

You could tie Derrin's activities into those of Naradna or simply make him a cohort of Naradna. Perhaps Derrin leads the PCs into a trap Naradna has set up to gather more resources for her long-term plans.

Coming in Part 3 of Spider, Spider, Burning Bright . . .

The Sword of Selvetarm is a powerful drow artifact. See more about it next time!

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